DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 302 925 EA 020 607

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TITLE The Relationship between Secondary Teachers' Perceived Levels of Burnout and Their Perceptions of Their Principals' Supervisory Behaviors.
PUB DATE Nov 88
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Louisville, KY, November 8-11, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Evaluation; *Principals; Secondary Education; *Secondary School Teachers; Teacher Administrator Relationship; *Teacher Alienation; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Burnout; *Teacher Morale; Teacher Motivation; Teacher Persistence
IDENTIFIERS *Mississippi

ABSTRACT

This study investigated differences in teachers' perceptions of their burnout levels and their perceptions of their principals' supervisory behaviors. Demographic variables of gender, race, and subject area were considered. A random sample of 192 Mississippi teachers of English, math, science, and social studies was drawn from secondary schools having any or all of grades 9 through 12. Respondents (N=120) completed two questionnaires: the Maslach Burnout Inventory and the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire. Data were analyzed using one-way analysis of variance and t-tests for the dichotomous demographic variables of gender and race. Results showed that teachers' perceptions of their burnout levels and their perceptions of the principals' supervisory behaviors are related. Teachers who perceived their own levels of emotional exhaustion to be low also perceived their principals as nondirective. Teachers who did feel burned out perceived their principals as directive. These findings suggest that teachers prefer to work on staff development or curricular improvement projects without principal supervision. (JAM)

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SECONDARY TEACHERS' PERCEIVED LEVELS OF BURNOUT AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR PRINCIPALS' SUPERVISORY BEHAVIORS

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Paper presented at the
Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the
Mid-South Educational Research Association
Louisville, KY

November, 1988

EA 020 607

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Teachers' Perceptions of Burnout and of Their Principals' Supervisory Behaviors

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to determine if there were significant differences between teachers' perceptions of their levels of professional burnout and their perceptions of their principals' supervisory behaviors.

Background

Burnout has been a topic of interest for teachers and administrators since the 1970's. The phenomenon occurs at all educational levels and affects growing numbers of service-related professionals, not only in teaching but in other professions as well. In a review of the literature, burnout was characterized by Maslach and Jackson (1986) as involving a sense of emotional exhaustion, a feeling of depersonalization, and a loss of feelings of personal accomplishment. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) identified psychological stress, an aspect of burnout, as a relationship between the person and the environment that taxes the individual beyond his or her resources and

threatens his or her well-being. Edelwich and Brodsky (1980) defined burnout as a progressive loss of idealism, energy, and purpose experienced by people in the helping profession as a result of the conditions of their work. Freudenberger (1975) defined burnout as a wearing out, failing, or becoming exhausted because of excessive demands on strength, energy, and resources. Burnout varied within individuals and had identifiable, progressive stages. The progressive stages of burnout began with the compulsion to prove oneself, in which excessive expectations led the individual to seek success, to excel, or to conquer. Middle stages included distortion of values, disengagement, observable behavior changes, depersonalization, and depression. The final stage was identified as total burnout exhaustion, in which the individual finds life meaningless and exhibits physical and mental exhaustion (Freudenberger and North, 1985).

The stages of burnout were evidenced in teaching, and burnout appeared to be increasing (McGuire, 1979). Surveys of teachers reported job stress and dissatisfaction, health and family problems, or serious consideration of job change. Many of the reported burnout symptoms, distressors, or outcomes could be related to role conflict/role ambiguity, lack of occupational feedback and communication, individual factors, and training deficits (Cedoline, 1982).

Supervisory behaviors contributed to the symptoms of

burnout. An analysis of the literature of supervision revealed a variety of definitions of supervision and a range of behaviors. Supervision was defined by Harris (1975) as a process of utilizing teachers and materials to produce the optimal teacher-learning outcomes. As the supervisors worked with teachers and materials, they employed patterns of behavior which were identified with a number of designations by various authors. For the purpose of this research, Sistrunk's (1982) designations of Directive, Collaborative, and Non-Directive dimensions of supervisory behavior were considered. Directive supervisors were skilled at accomplishing tasks, at getting and maintaining involvement, and at interacting with persons without exploiting them (Cribbin, 1981). Collaborative supervisors exhibited behaviors in which communication was freer and more authentic and through which participative decision-making was the norm (Cribbin, 1981). Non-directive supervisors were essentially uninvolved, allowing teachers to make their own decisions.

Supervisory tasks which were associated with the problem of burnout in this study were: developing curriculum, organizing for instruction, staff development, and evaluation of instruction and instructors. According to Greenblatt (1983), certain dimensions of supervisory behavior produced more effective teaching behaviors. Kersten and Sloan (1987) found that principals' rated

themselves as predominantly collaborative, but Marquit's (1968) much early study showed that principals' and teachers' perceptions of supervisory behavior were not congruent. His tasks included curriculum development, providing in-service education, and evaluating. Frisbie's (1969) examination of perceptions of supervisory behavior and morale found that teachers rated developing curriculum at the highest level and evaluation at the lowest level of supervisory function. Ngugi (1984) renormed the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire, Form 1, developed by Sistrunk (1982). She found that teachers preferred principals to be more directive in certain areas and more collaborative in curriculum development, staff development, and evaluation of instruction. Patricia Sistrunk (1982) found that perceptions of supervisory behavior affected perceptions of job satisfaction. Finally, in her study, Vickers (1988) found that principals perceived themselves to be more collaborative than teachers perceived them to be.

The Problem

The problem was to determine if there were significant differences between teachers' perceptions of high, moderate, or low levels of burnout and their perceptions of their principals' supervisory behaviors. Specific answers to the following questions were pursued:

1. Were there significant differences between

teachers' perceptions of high, moderate, or low levels of burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory Form Ed, and their perceptions of their principals' supervisory behaviors, as measured by the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire, Form 1, Subscales 1, 2, 5, and 8?

2. Were there significant differences between the subscale scores of the Maslach Burnout Inventory Form Ed and the dimensional scores within subscales 1, 2, 5, and 8 of the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire, Form 1?
3. Were there significant differences between the subscale scores of the Maslach Burnout Inventory, Form Ed and the subscale scores of Subscales 1, 2, 5, and 8 of the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire, Form 1?
4. Were there significant differences between the subscale scores of the Maslach Burnout Inventory Form Ed and the dimensional scores of Subscales 1, 2, 5, and 8 of the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire, Form 1, when the variables of gender, race, and subject taught were considered?

Research Procedures

An Overview

Collection of the data for this study was completed in May and June of 1988 in order to obtain perceptions of burnout when it would (hypothetically) be optimally present. This time period for collection of the data was based on the assumption that the ending of the school year would be more demanding on personal resources, more hectic, and more distressful. Also, the assumption was that accumulated perceptions of supervisory behaviors would differentiate between directive, collaborative and non-directive dimensions more effectively.

Subjects

The subjects of this study consisted of 192 secondary teachers of math, English, science and social studies in Mississippi schools which had any or all of grades nine through 12. The survey was conducted during the spring semester of the 1987-1988 school year; questionnaires were mailed after April 20. The data for this study were derived from the responses of 120 (62%) teachers from 15 of the 24 schools surveyed.

Instruments

Instruments chosen for this research were the Maslach Burnout Inventory Form Ed (Maslach and Jackson, 1982) and the Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire, Form 1

(Sistrunk, 1982). Alpha coefficient reliability scores for the MBI Form Ed were: Emotional Exhaustion, .90; Depersonalization, .79; and Personal Accomplishment, .71 (Maslach and Jackson, 1982). Alpha coefficient reliability scores for the SBDQ, Form 1, were:

Subscale 1 - Curriculum	.93
Subscale 2 - Instruction	.89
Subscale 5 - Staff Development	.94
Subscale 8 - Evaluation of Instruction	.94
Dimension 1 - Directive	.92
Dimension 2 - Collaborative	.93
Dimension 3 - Non-Directive	.89

(Ngugi, 1982).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory Form Ed, (1982) an instrument designed to measure hypothetical aspects of the burnout syndrome, consists of 22 statements about personal feelings. Respondents select a number from a rating scale as follows:

0 = never
1 = a few times a year or less
2 = once a month or less
3 = a few times a month
4 = once a week
5 = a few times a week
6 = every day.

This instrument yields scores for three subscales: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment.

The Supervisory Behavior Description Questionnaire, Form 1, an ordinal scale questionnaire developed by Sistrunk (1982), was used to assess teachers' perceptions of their principals' supervisory behaviors. Supervisory behaviors were: Directive, Collaborative and Non-Directive. The

eight subscales of the SBDQ, Form 1, were:

1. Curriculum Development
2. Instructional Organization
3. Staffing
4. Providing Materials and Facilities
5. Staff Development
6. Special Student Services
7. Developing Community Relations
8. Evaluation of Instruction

Four of these subscales were chosen for the purpose of determining a relationship between perceived supervisory behaviors. The four subscales were:

1. Developing Curriculum
2. Organizing for Instruction
5. Staff Development
8. Evaluation of Instruction and Instructors.

Method of Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using a social sciences package at the Thomas E. Tramel computing Center at Mississippi State University. One-way analysis was used to answer Questions 1, 2, and 3. To answer Question 4, t-tests of significance were done for the demographic variables of race and gender. To complete Question 4, one-way analysis was used to analyze data concerning subjects taught.

Results of the Study

A significant difference was found between teachers' levels of burnout and principals' supervisory behaviors. Central Tendency Data and F Ratio are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

A COMPARISON OF F RATIO AND CENTRAL TENDENCY DATA FOR SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES ON THE MBI FORM ED AND THE SBDQ, FORM 1, SUBSCALES 1, 2, 5, AND 8

		Emotional Exhaustion		
Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F Ratio
Dev. Cur:				
Collaborative:				3.418*
High	51	3.1373°	1.4969	
Moderate	44	2.7727	1.5381	
Low	25	2.2000	1.2910	
Non-Directive:				4.785*
High	51	1.0196	1.3927	
Moderate	44	1.3864	1.4661	
Low	25	2.1600°	1.7954	
Staff Dev:				
Non-Directive:				5.153*
High	51	1.9804	2.1212	
Moderate	44	2.5455	2.0737	
Low	25	3.8400°	3.2234	

*Indicates significance at .05 level ($F \geq 3.07; df\ 2,117$)
°Indicates Scheffé post hoc results, group with highest mean score

TABLE 1--Continued

A COMPARISON OF F RATIO AND CENTRAL TENDENCY DATA FOR SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES ON THE MBI FORM ED AND THE SBDQ, FORM 1, SUBSCALES 1, 2, 5, AND 8

		Depersonalization		
Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F Ratio
Dev. Cur:				
Collaborative:				3.214*
High	53	3.1321°	1.5816	
Moderate	34	2.7941	1.2975	
Low	33	2.3030	1.4681	
Staff Dev:				
Collaborative:				4.145*
High	53	6.1698°	2.7227	
Moderate	34	4.7059	3.1385	
Low	33	3.3333	2.9439	
Evaluation:				
Directive:				8.691*
High	53	2.6604	2.1834	
Moderate	34	2.6176	1.9850	
Low	33	4.4848°	2.2929	
Collaborative:				4.779*
High	53	3.6226°	2.5437	
Moderate	34	2.5882	2.6528	
Low	33	2.0606	2.0454	

*Indicates significance at .05 level ($F > 3.07$; df 2,117)
°Indicates Scheffé post hoc results, group with highest mean score

When comparing the dimensions within the subscale of Developing Curriculum on the SBDQ, Form 1, and the subscale of Emotional Exhaustion on the MBI Form Ed, significant differences were found at the .05 level of confidence for the Collaborative and Non-Directive dimensions. Teachers perceived high levels of emotional exhaustion when they perceived collaborative supervisory behaviors. Teachers perceived lower levels of emotional exhaustion when they perceived non-directive supervisory behaviors. For this subscale of SBDQ, Form 1, and the MBI Form Ed subscale of Depersonalization, a significant difference was found for the Collaborative dimension. Teachers perceived high levels of depersonalization when they perceived collaborative supervisory behaviors.

For the dimensions of the SBDQ, Form 1, subscale of Staff Development and the MBI Form Ed subscale of Emotional Exhaustion, a significant difference was found for the Non-Directive dimension. Teachers perceived low levels of emotional exhaustion when they perceived Non-Directive supervisory behaviors. For the same subscale and the MBI Form Ed subscale of Depersonalization, there was a significant difference. Teachers perceived high levels of depersonalization when they perceived collaborative supervisory behaviors.

For the dimensions of the SBDQ, Form 1, subscale of Evaluation of Instruction and Instructors and the MBI Form

Ed subscale of Depersonalization, both the Directive and Collaborative dimensions were significant at the .05 level of confidence. For the Directive dimension, teachers perceived low levels of depersonalization, but, for the Collaborative dimension, they perceived high levels of depersonalization.

There were no significant differences found for any of the dimensions within Subscales 1, 2, 5, and 8 of the SBDQ, Form 1, and the MBI Form Ed subscale of Personal Accomplishment. Also, no significant differences were found for the SBDQ, Form 1, Subscale 2 (Organizing for Instruction) dimensions and any of the subscales of the MBI Form Ed. Gender was significant when a t-test was used for the MBI Form Ed. Males perceived higher levels of depersonalization than did females. Data are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2

A COMPARISON OF CENTRAL TENDENCY DATA FOR GENDER ON THE SUBSCALES OF THE MBI FORM ED

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T-Value
Emotional Exhaustion:				-.85
Group 1 (M)	44	1.7045	.765	
Group 2 (F)	76	1.8289	.773	
Depersonalization:				2.39*
Group 1 (M)	44	2.0682	.900	
Group 2 (F)	76	1.6974	.766	
Personal Accomplishment:				.37
Group 1 (M)	44	1.8864	.784	
Group 2 (F)	76	1.8289	.823	

Race was significantly different on the Directive dimension of the SBDQ, Form 1, for Developing Curriculum. Non-Caucasians perceived this dimension more frequently than did Caucasians. Data are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3

A COMPARISON OF CENTRAL TENDENCY DATA FOR RACE ON THE SUBSCALES AND DIMENSIONS OF THE SBDQ, FORM 1

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T-Value
Developing Curriculum:				
Directive:				-2.55*
Group 1 (C)	85	.6353	.974	
Group 2 (Non-C)	35	1.2000	1.368	
Collaborative:				- .09
Group 1 (C)	85	2.8000	1.494	
Group 1 (Non-C)	35	2.8286	1.543	
Non-Directive:				1.92
Group 1 (C)	85	1.5647	1.546	
Group 2 (Non-C)	35	.9714	1.524	
Organizing for Instruction:				
Directive:				.15
Group 1 (C)	85	1.7529	1.290	
Group 2 (Non-C)	35	1.7143	1.274	
Collaborative:				.32
Group 1 (C)	85	1.9765	1.371	
Group 2 (Non-C)	35	1.8857	1.471	
Non-Directive:				- .54
Group 1 (C)	85	1.2706	1.159	
Group 2 (Non-C)	35	1.4000	1.288	

TABLE 3--Continued

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	T-Value
Staff Development:				
Directive:				- .72
Group 1 (C)	85	3.7882	2.474	
Group 2 (Non-C)	35	4.1429	2.439	
Collaborative:				.92
Group 1 (C)	85	4.6941	3.043	
Group 2 (Non-C)	35	4.1429	2.830	
Non-Directive:				- .40
Group 1 (C)	85	2.5176	2.477	
Group 2 (Non-C)	35	2.7143	2.432	
Evaluation of Instruction and Instructors:				
Directive:				- .15
Group 1 (C)	85	3.1294	2.354	
Group 2 (Non-C)	35	3.2000	2.180	
Collaborative:				1.15
Group 1 (C)	85	3.3529	2.635	
Group 2 (Non-C)	35	2.7714	2.224	
Non-Directive:				-1.42
Group 1 (C)	85	1.5175	1.722	
Group 2 (Non-C)	35	2.0286	1.948	

*Indicates significance at .05 level ($t > \pm 1.980$; df 2,118)

For subjects taught, the Collaborative dimension of the SBDQ, Form 1, for the Subscale of Organizing for Instruction was significant at the .05 level of confidence. Social studies had the highest mean score, but the groups involved were homogenous subsets. Data are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4
A COMPARISON OF CENTRAL TENDENCY DATA FOR ORGANIZING FOR INSTRUCTION/COLLABORATION ON THE SBDQ, FORM 1

Variable	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	F Ratio
Group 1 (English)	30	2.1667	1.3667	3.250
Group 2 (Math)	30	1.3000	.9523	
Group 3 (Science)	30	2.0333	1.3257	
Group 4 (Social Studies)	30	2.300	1.6846	
Total	120	1.9500	1.3954	

Note: Homogenous subsets (Subsets of groups, whose highest and lowest means do not differ by more than the shortest significant range for a subset of that size.)

Implication of Study

The data showed that teachers' perceptions of levels of burnout and their perceptions of their principals' supervisory behaviors are related. The teachers' perceptions of high levels of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization when they perceived their principals' supervisory behaviors to be collaborative indicated that this dimension was not as effective as had been previously reported. Teachers' involvement with developing curriculum, staff development, and evaluation of instruction under collaborative supervisory behaviors increased emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Higher mean scores for

directive supervisory behaviors and low levels of depersonalization indicate that teachers felt less threatened when being evaluated by a supervisor who told them what was expected and when to expect it.

Low levels of emotional exhaustion were perceived when the principals engaged in developing curriculum and staff development with non-directive supervisory behaviors. This finding indicated that the teachers' perceived the principals as being non-involved with the two tasks. Teachers preferred to choose staff development activities personally, rather than working out a plan with principals or working entirely under principals' plans. Teachers do not like to work on curriculum development tasks under directive or collaborative supervision, probably because they do not like to work on curriculum tasks at all.

In conclusion, there were things teachers wanted done for them ("Let's get it over and move on.") and things they wanted to do for themselves ("Leave me alone and I'll get it done!"). Improved communication between teachers and principals could be used to alleviate teachers' perceptions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

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